

**GRADUATE ASSISTANT GUIDE**  
University of Connecticut  
Civil Engineering Field of Study  
Transportation and Urban Engineering Area of Concentration  
Revised August 31, 2009

**IMPORTANT NOTICE:** Each Transportation and Urban Engineering (TUE) student who receives funding as a graduate research or academic assistant must read this entire document and discuss its contents with his/her supervisor as a condition of receiving the assistantship.

**Graduate Research Assistants**

In TUE the faculty aim to match each graduate student being awarded a graduate research assistantship (GRA) with a project that relates directly to the student's desired thesis or dissertation topic. In this case, work conducted for the GRA can also be used for the student's thesis or dissertation. However, this ideal situation is not always possible, for example when research funding is not available in the topic a student wishes to cover for his/her thesis or dissertation. In any case, preparation of the academic thesis or dissertation usually requires more work than is required for the research project, or vice versa. This work towards the thesis or dissertation is unpaid and represents the work for which the student receives credit towards the MS Plan A or PhD degree. It is common for students to underestimate the time contribution required to produce a professional quality document that advances the field of study.

TUE GRA's are funded primarily through the Connecticut Transportation Institute and in some cases through the Department of Civil & Environmental Engineering. This affects the location where financial paper work for the student's pay and expenses is handled. The number of hours of work expected of you as a GRA as well as the projects to which you will contribute is usually outlined at the beginning of each academic year or term in an official offer letter from the Head of Civil & Environmental Engineering and the Director of CTI. It is important to note that all work for a funded research project is work for pay, and each student should take his/her GRA work as seriously as a professional job with any other organization.

**Vacation time**

Students are expected to contribute their contracted number of hours of work each and every week for which they are paid. Most TUE students are supported as GRA's at a rate of 20 hours per week for the entire calendar year. This schedule does not directly provide for vacation time. Nevertheless, provision can be made to rearrange some of this working time to permit taking extended time off for vacation travel. Such time must be made up before or after the leave time as worked out between the student and his/her project supervisor. Furthermore, work on projects is typically not steady, but can sometimes require periods of more intense work to meet deadlines or to coordinate with circumstances beyond the control of the student and his/her supervisor (such as data collection when weather or human activity conditions permit). Therefore each GRA must get the approval of his/her supervisor before planning any absence from work on the project for more than one weekday, and this approval must be cleared at least twice as much time in advance as the amount of time the student desires to take off. For example, for a two week absence, the student must speak to his/her supervisor at least 4 weeks before the beginning of the time he/she would like to take off. It is desirable to discuss this even farther in advance if

possible. In any case, do not purchase non-refundable airline tickets or make other irreversible decisions before speaking to your supervisor. In the case of any emergency that makes this kind of notice impossible, notify your supervisor of the situation as soon as possible to facilitate making appropriate arrangements.

This policy does not apply to any time period for which a student is not being paid, although it is still a good idea to inform your academic advisor that you will be away and when you plan to return.

### **Renewal of GRA funding**

While GRA funding is generally renewed for students making satisfactory progress towards their degrees, it is unfortunately impossible to guarantee support for any student indefinitely. MS students can reasonably expect support for 16 to 21 months, and PhD students for 36 months, subject to the student's academic and research work performance and the availability of research project funding. Although funding is sometimes only arranged term by term, more often funding can be guaranteed a year at a time.

### **Graduate Academic Assistants**

A limited amount of funding is available from the Civil & Environmental Engineering department for graduate academic assistantships (GAA's). GAA duties generally include grading homework, assisting faculty in preparation for laboratory and fieldwork, assisting students with laboratory and fieldwork, and in limited situations, leading small tutorial class sections. Preference for these positions is given to students who have themselves excelled in these courses and/or show promise as good quality teachers. It is not the practice of the transportation group to use GAA's simply as a source of graduate student funding, rather GAA's who can provide excellent support to undergraduates are desired. It is currently the policy of the Department for any given student to not receive funding as a GAA for more than two academic semesters.

### **Office supplies**

Work on research projects and for classes requires consumption of office supplies such as pens, writing pads, paper for laser printers, computer disks, file folders, report binders, staples and staplers, binder clips. Supplies are available from the CEE office; get your supplies from whoever is on duty in the CEE main office. These supplies must only be used for activities directly related to a funded research project or for teaching a course, and not be wasted or used haphazardly. Students must purchase their own supplies for course work and personal use.

### **Photocopying**

There are two photocopiers in the CEE office: a small copier in the main office and a large one in the mail room. Using the large one requires entering an access code; using the small one does not. All funded research projects and courses have an access code on the large copier assigned for the purpose of tracking expenses. Your supervisor will provide you with the access code to use; please make all photocopies needed for your project using this access code on the large copier. These codes must not be used to make copies for your own course work or personal use; such copies should be made using the small copier for a charge of \$0.10 per copy, payable in cash at the time of the copy.